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Mr. George C. Garnett read a paper "On Deep-sea Soundings."

The Secretary read a paper by Mr. George J. Knox "On the Composition of Cadmium, Arsenic, and Nitrogen."

MONDAY, DECEMBER 12, 1864.

JOHN F. WALLER, LL. D., Vice-President, in the Chair.

P. Joseph Keenan, Esq., was elected a Member of the Academy.

DENIS H. KELLY read the following paper:—

DESCRIPTION OF TWO IRISH MS. TRACTS BY THE CELEBRATED DUALD MC FIRBIS, TRANSCRIBED BY W. HENNESSY, ESQ.; AND PRESENTED BY HIM TO THE ROYAL IRISH ACADEMY, THROUGH D. H. KELLY, M. R. I. A.

MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN,—Mr. William Hennessy has intrusted to me, for presentation to the Academy, this small Book, containing faithful transcripts, with the contractions resolved, of two Tracts compiled by the celebrated Derald Mc Firbis, the Amanuensis of Sir James Ware, the originals of which are preserved in the Bodleian Library, at Oxford, where Mr. Hennessy discovered them in the month of August last.

The MSS. from which these copies have been transcribed are in the beautifully minute and well-known handwriting of the learned and industrious D. Mc Firbis; and, although their contents are comprised in the small volume which I now submit to the Academy, the labourers in our wide field of Irish Archaeology will, I believe, find in them much that is well worthy of careful examination.

I feel some gratification myself in having suggested to Mr. Hennessy the importance of a careful examination of the Irish MS. collections in both the British Museum and the Bodleian at Oxford, on the occasion of his kindly undertaking for me to collate my transcript of an Irish MS. in which I am interested with its original in the British Museum; and I believe that the volume which forms the subject of my observations this evening is only an instalment of the fruits we may look for from Mr. Hennessy's visit.

It will be unnecessary for me to trouble the Academy with any observations on the character of Derald Mc Firbis, and the nature of his contributions to Irish history, topography, and genealogy. It is well known that he was the lineal descendant of the learned compilers of the Book of Leacan, the hereditary ollamhs in history and genealogy of the Hy Frachrach of the Moy; and those who wish for further information on the subject will find it on referring to our friend Dr. Petrie's Notice in vol. xviii. of the Academy's "Transactions," of our lamented friend O'Donovan's archaeological volume on the Tribes, &c., of the Hy Fiachrach; and to our equally lamented friend Eugene

O'Curry's Lectures, in which such particulars of Mc Firbis's life and writings as were then ascertainable have been faithfully set down. I may observe, however, in explanation of the manner in which his MS. collections became so widely dispersed, that after the death, in the year 1666, of his patron Sir James Ware, of whose house he had for some time been an inmate, he appears to have returned to his native place in the county of Sligo, leaving most, if not all, of his MSS. in the hands of Sir James Ware's son and heir.

It is pretty generally known that all Sir James Ware's MS. collections relating to Ireland were purchased from his son Robert, in 1686, by Lord Clarendon, then Lieutenant of Ireland.

After his Lordship's death they passed by sale into the possession of the Duke of Chandos, whom the witty and public-spirited Swift, Dean of St. Patrick's, in vain solicited to deposit them in the Library of Trinity College: his letters are given in the recently published correspondence of Mrs. Delany (Mary Granville), to whom he thus writes in October, 1734:—

“Are you acquainted with the Duke of Chandos? I know your Uncle Lansdowne and he were intimate friends. I have known the Duke long and well, and thought I had a share in his common favour; but he hath lately given me great cause of complaint.

“I was pressed by many persons of great learning here to write to his Grace, that having some old records relating to this kingdom, which were taken from hence by the Earl of Clarendon, who was Lieutenant here, and purchased them from private owners, and are now in the Duke's possession, that his Grace would please to bestow them to the University here; because Irish antiquities are of little value or curiosity to any other nation.

“I writ with all the civility in my power, and with compliments on the fame of his generosity, and in a style very different from what I use to my friends with titles; but He hath been pleased to be silent for above six weeks, which is the first treatment I ever met with of that kind from any English Person of quality, and what would better become a *little Irish Baron* than a *great English Duke*.

“But whether grandeur or party be the cause I shall not enquire, but leave it to you; and expect you will employ ‘my Brother Lansdowne’ (His Lordship will tell you, why I give him that Title), if He still converses with the Duke, to know the reason of His treatment. And you shall be my instrument to find it out, altho' it should cost you two shillings for a Chair.

“JN. SWIFT.”

In the following month of February he writes again to the same correspondent:—

“I am very much obliged to your care about that Business with the Duke of Chandos. I hear he told a person he would grant my request, but that he had *no acquaintance with me*.”

“J. S.”

These MSS. underwent a second dispersion, by public auction, on the death of the Duke of Chandos; when Dr. Milles, Dean of Exeter (whose uncle had considerable property in Ireland), purchased a large portion, and deposited them in the British Museum, where they are now known as the “*Clarendon Collection*.” Dr. Rawlinson bought others, and bequeathed them to St. John’s College, Oxford, whence they were subsequently transferred to the Bodleian Library; and some part fell into the hands of Lord Newport, Lord Chancellor of Ireland, and the remainder were widely scattered, and no trace remained of them.

A Catalogue of Ware’s MSS. was published in Dublin, in 1648, of which, I believe, there is but *one copy* known to exist, and *that* is in the Bodleian Library; but, as it was published before Ware’s acquaintance with Mc Firbis, it of course contains little information regarding the productions of the latter.

As Lord Clarendon’s property, a Catalogue of the MSS. appears at the end of the “*Catal. Codd. MSS. Angli et Hib., Oxon, 1697;*” and the Duke of Chandos’ Sale Catalogue, 1746, affords a reasonably accurate description of the collection.

Having premised thus much as to the fate of the Tracts under consideration from the date of their purchase by Lord Clarendon until they were deposited in the Bodleian Library, I now invite the attention of the Academy to the *Tracts themselves*.

No. I.—THE FIRST TRACT,

to which is prefixed an Invocation of Jesus, Mary, Patrick, Columcille, Bridget, and the Holy Trinity, is entitled,

“ The Authors of Erin, with an Account of their Authorship, and their Paternity, are arranged here by Dubhaltagh son of Giolla-Josa Móp Mac Firbisigh of Leacan, in Tir Frachrach of the Moy. 1656.”

No. II.—THE SECOND TRACT,

to which the same Invocations are prefixed, is entitled,

“ An Aid to Remembrance, here, regarding certain Bishops of Erinn, who are not now reckoned as having filled Bishops Sees, Tho’ they were so accounted, in their own Sees and Times. Understand Reader the *Sees* are mentioned *first*, and the *Bishops* afterwards.

“ I am Dubhaltach Mac Firbisigh who arranges this 17th March, Anno Christi, 1665 or 1666.”

Although, strangely enough, the name of Duard Mc Firbis is not even mentioned in O’Reilly’s “Account of Irish Writers,” it was known that he had compiled “A Treatise on Authors.” And the late lamented John O’Donovan and Eugene O’Curry, when deplored the *loss of this Tract*, only echoed the sentiments which our venerated Academician, Dr. Petrie, had on more than one occasion given expression to. Mac Firbis himself, in the preface to his great genealo-

gical work, refers to such a compilation, when, speaking of the various ancient authors, he says:—"Why should I be enumerating them, for they cannot be counted without writing a large book of their names, . . . And, not to give but the *Titles alone* of the Tracts which they wrote, *as we have done before now*." (See Curry's "Lectures," p. 218.) But this preface was written in the year 1650, whereas the original of the Tract before us was compiled or transcribed by the compiler from an earlier copy, in the year 1656, old style.

This Tract is, I regret to say, defective; it is Mr. Hennessy's opinion that *it was never finished*; and, as exhibiting his reasons for coming to this conclusion in opposition to Mc Firbis's statement just referred to, I may quote a letter received from him, accompanying this donation:—

"DEAR SIR—During a recent examination of the Irish MS. collection preserved in the Bodleian Library, I had the good fortune to discover two original Tracts in the handwriting of Duard Mac Firbis, which somehow escaped the keen research of the late Dr. O'Donovan.

"Having accomplished the laborious task which I had proposed to myself of making a transcript of the profusely gloss'd copy of the Festiology of *Ængus*, preserved in a MS. of the twelfth century in the *Laud Collection*, I made as close an examination as my limited time permitted of the very rare and inestimable MSS. preserved in both the Laud and Rawlinson Collections. On looking over the small paper volume 'No. 480, Rawlinson,' I recognised the, to me, well known handwriting of Mac Firbis. The MS. consists principally of Ecclesiastical Tracts, one of which, comprising 11 folios, is thus entitled:—

"Here beginneth the Booke of St. Patritius the Bishoppe, entreating of the Joyes of Heaven and the Paines of Hell, and of the goodness and evilnesse of this world."

"And at the end—'Here Endeth the Booke of St. Patricke the Bishoppe, translated out of Lattin into English by R. S., 1585.'

"And the translator adds—'Vide ye Booke calld 'Pricke of the ye conscience upon the same subject more at large.'

"The portion in Mac Firbis's handwriting consists of only fourteen folios, but closely written, and the handwriting being very minute, and so beautiful as to excite surprise, when it is remembered that the writer was nearly seventy years of age at the time.

"The first eight folios contain a part of his '*Lost Treatise on Irish Authors*,' and the remaining six contain a curious '*Tract on Ancient Irish Bishops and Bishopricks*,' not accounted as such in Mac Firbis's time.

"At the end of every page of the first of these, the Treatise on Authors, except the last, the letter or word with which the succeeding page commences is uniformly added; and the omission of this mark of continuation from the last page is, I am inclined to think, a proof that the author never completed the task which he had set before

himself. And I may also observe that in some places the memorandum, 'see page,' occurs, the No. of the page not being entered, as it would doubtless have been had the Treatise been completed.

"It is within the range of possibility that he intended in this Tract to expand the Catalogue of Authors, which he states in the preface to his Genealogies he had compiled, but the execution of this project was cut short by some cause or other which we are unacquainted with. At all events, of both these Tracts, such as they are, I have made accurate transcripts, and I venture to confide them to your care for presentation to the Royal Irish Academy. And I beg to add, should the Academy deem them worthy of publication in its 'Transactions,' that I will cheerfully undertake the duty of translating and preparing these Tracts for the press.

"I am, dear Sir, yours faithfully,  
"W. HENNESSY."

"To D. E. Kelly, Esq."

Now for the Tracts themselves.

#### No. I.

This has the words "De Scriptoribus Hibernicis" written on the upper margin of the first page, in a handwriting very much resembling Sir James Ware's; and some words are also glossed in the same handwriting. But Sir James was certainly not sufficiently versed in the Irish language to have been able to interpret the words explained. The author begins by advancing the usual arguments put forward by the critics of his age respecting the antiquity of the Scotic, i. e. the Irish language; after which he enumerates the principal professors of knowledge who accompanied the several immigrations into Ireland from Fintaun, who came with Cesara before the Flood! to Amergin, the son of Milesius; and, coming down to later times, he adds some names to the list of families which furnished hereditary Professors of the several branches of Poetry, Law, Medicine, and History.

In the department of Senchas, or History, for example, he enumerates the following families, in addition to those already known, viz. :—

The O'Flyns, The O'Dunns,	 The O'Quills, and The O'Squinins.
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The principal hereditary Professors of Law he states to have been—

The Clann Aodhagan, or <i>Egan</i> ; The Siol Flachadha, or <i>M'Clanchys</i> ; The Clann an Brethmhain ;	The O'Breslens ; The O'Dorans ; and The O'Haras.
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The Ollamhs of *Ac Dana*, or Professors of Poetry, he states belonged chiefly to the following families :—

O'Dalys,	Mac Graith,
O'Donnellans,	O'Cullen,
O'Higgins,	O'Moran,
Mac a Wards,	M'Casserly,
O'Hancarty,	O'Phelan,
Mac Convey,	O'Heffernan,
O'Hussey,	Mac Keogh,
O'Rooney,	O'Hayden,
O'Coffey,	O'Gneev,
O'Gearan,	O'Lorean,
O'Cloomhan,	Mac Murray,
O'Cronga,	and many others.

And amongst the Professors of the Art of Healing he mentions, in addition to those enumerated in Sir William R. Wilde's learned Essay, prefixed to the Table of Deaths, "Census Report," 1851, the names of

Mac Neagh, qr. Mac Niað,	O'Connell,
Clann Multeely,	O'Leyne,
O'Fennelly,	O'Beglan,
O'Ronan,	Clan an Deasy,
O'Feely,	Mac Gilmartin,
O'Cuhin,	O'Hencys,
O'Meledy,	&c., &c.

Then the author proceeds to describe the nature of the written remains of Irish literature, and observes that the knowledge of Feneachas or the laws was confined to three or four sons of the Ollamh of Connaught, including himself, I presume.

"Woe is me!" he says, "the little regard Erin has for the preservation of knowledge or superiority."

The subject of the formation and development of the Celtic language under Feninsa Farsaiddh and his disciples, and the invention of the Ogham alphabet, is discussed in detail, and with much ingenuity of argument. This chapter is illustrated by a sketch of what he calls *the most usual Ogham character*, corresponding with the third alphabet in the "Book of Ballymote," except that M'Tirbis has by mistake omitted the vowel signs. At page 7 of the original text, but page 28 of the present volume, reference is made to a volume of laws, called Eóðeð (Edghedh), attributed to Luigne mc Eremhon, of which I am not aware that any fragments have been preserved.

The treatise ends with a notice of the celebrated Naente Nae-Brethach, or "of the 9 judgements," who is alleged to have lived 200 years before the Christian era; and although this notice is unfortunately incomplete, it is curious, as attributing to *him* the famous judgment of "To every cow belongs its calf," which is asserted to have been

delivered by King Dermot mac Carvall, in the dispute between SS. Columb Cille and Finian of Magh Bile respecting the *copy* of St. Finian's Gospel, which Columb Cille had made without the knowledge of its owner, and which the king therefore adjudged to St. Finian.

[The Tract ends here, incomplete.]

#### No. II.

The second Tract contains an alphabetical list of 270 places reputed as *Bishops' Sees* in ancient times, appended to which are the names of some of the principal ecclesiastics or bishops who ruled therein.

The entries correspond very generally with the records of the "Four Masters," and with the "Martyrology of Donegal;" but there are some discrepancies, chiefly chronological, which, although of no great importance, afford sufficient proof that Mac Firbis compiled his treatise from *other authorities* than those that the O'Clerys made use of.

Under the head of Ara, or the "Great Aran Island," in the Bay of Galway, he gives some interesting particulars regarding Aelchu, called the *Pupa, or Pope of Aran*, who is stated to have for some time filled the chair of Gregory the Great, after the latter had resigned it for a quiet retreat in Ara of the Saints.

And, speaking of St. Brecean, the compiler makes a statement which, if it has been rightly interpreted, renders the alleged interment of that saint in the Isle of Aran a matter of some uncertainty. The entry runs thus:—

"*Brecan [or Bracan] Bishop* [this may be the Brecan of Aran] *in Killbricken, in Thomond.*"

According to the idiom used by Irish scribes, the expression "in Killbricken" would mean "buried in Killbricken."

The entry in the printed text of the "Martyrology of Donegal" is nearly similar; but, owing apparently to a slight defect in the manuscript from which the text has been taken, the sense is not so clearly evident as in the present statement.

The note following *Cill Insi* is also interesting, as furnishing the site of that church, which was *in Inis Sgoreobhuin* (now probably *Iniscrone*, in Tireragh, county of Sligo); and the compiler adds, "that the walls of the church were standing in his time."

The entry at *Cill Sgandail* is very valuable, as identifying that church with *Cill Bian*, the situation of which has hitherto escaped discovery. Possibly our indefatigable Secretary, with this *datum*, may be enabled to add one more to the long list of places which he has identified.

Kill Cuana is here identified with Cill Tuama, and Cill Tidil with Drum Tidil. At Druim Urchaille the following note occurs, namely, the *Seven Bishops of Druim Urchaille*.

N. B.—143 are the number of churches or places in which *seven bi-*

*shops resided at the same time*—1001 is therefore the entire number of those bishops. Thus in the “Naemh Seanchas” the commencement is with “*those seven bishops*.”

The *List of Groups of 7 Bishops* preserved in the “Leabhar Breac,” consists of 142, or within one of the number stated by Mac Firbis; whilst that given by Ængus the Culdee comprises 141.

These important records could hardly have been known to the writer who, in a recent number of “The Gentleman’s Magazine,” took exception to Dr. Todd’s statement in his “Life of St. Patrick” respecting this ancient practice, and the origin of its institution.

The name of the church usually written *Indednen*, the situation of which has hitherto evaded all attempts at discovery, is written *Ednen*, and entered under the letter *E*. Its identification may now, therefore, be found possible.

In treating of Lusk, the compiler has made an observation of much importance as regards the value of the “Chronicon Scotorum,” the most ancient, and indeed *only reliable*, copy of which is that transcribed by himself, and preserved in Trinity College Library, from which Mr. Hennessy has made an accurate translation, which we trust may soon be published.

Speaking of *Mac Cuillin*, Bishop of Lusk, predecessor of our worthy Secretary, he observes in reference to the other names by which the bishop was known. What Mac Firbis says is, “*Quies Cumdedæ mac Cathbadha*, i. e. *Mac Cuillin Epscop Luska*.” This expression is identical in terms with the record of his *Obit* contained in the “Chronicon Scotorum” of the year 497; and there can be little doubt that the chronicle in question is the authority to which Duard Mac Firbis referred. Now, it is not likely that the latter would have *thus spoken of himself* in the third person. It was not his practice, as may be ascertained by referring to his writings in this Library, in which he frequently alludes to “*what I have said*,” “*what we have observed before*,” &c.

It was the opinion of Professor O’Curry—“That the Chronicon Scotorum was an original compilation of D. Mc Firbis;” but the work itself contains internal evidence to the contrary. Indeed, in a very imperfect copy of the “Chronicle,” in the collection in this Academy, the original is said to have been compiled by *Giollo-Christ O’Malone*, an Abbot of Clonmacnois, who lived in the twelfth century. It is more probable, however, that it may be found to be “the Volume of Annals known to have been written by one of D. Mc Firbis’s ancestors, Giolla-Josa Mc Firbis, who died in the year 1301,” and to whom Harris refers in his edition of *Ware’s Bishops*, article Tuam.” But we will not prejudge a question which is at present in course of elucidation by my intelligent friend Mr. Hennessy himself.

It is worthy of remark that the ancient name of Lambay Island is written *Rechra*, and not Rechrain, which, as Dr. Reeves has remarked in a note at p. 262 “*Martyrol. Donegal*,” is the form of the word in the genitive case, Rechra being the nominative.

Under the head of Siol Murray, the Tribe Name of the O'Conors of Connaught, and their correlatives, Mac Firbis says—" Some persons imply that whenever there is a Bishop of the Siol Murray, he is Bishop of Elphin ;" but, he adds—" I am not quite certain of this at all times." This observation is of some importance, and deserving of inquiry, considering that the episcopal history of that diocese is a complete blank from the time of St. Patrick down to the middle of the twelfth century. The transcript extends over 45 pages of the neatly written volume which I have now the honour to present, in the name of my friend, Mr. William Hennessy, and the contents of which I have very imperfectly described.

Mr. Kelly presented to the Library of the Academy, on the part of Mr. William M. Hennessy, a transcript of the MS. made by himself. Whereupon it was—

RESOLVED,—That the marked thanks of the Academy be returned to Mr. Hennessy and Mr. Kelly for the donation.

W. H. Hardinge, Esq., read a paper "On Manuscript Mapped and other Townland Surveys in Ireland of a Public Character."

The Secretary read the following letter, addressed to the President, from HENRY O'HARA, Esq.:—

ON A CROMLECH AND OTHER ANCIENT REMAINS IN THE PRESIDENCY OF  
MADRAS.

"VERY REV. SIR,—It may interest the Members of the Royal Irish Society to know that in the Madras Presidency, East Indies, Cromlechs such as are found in Ireland are met with.

Fig. 1.

"I enclose a rough pen-and-ink sketch of one standing some short distance from the Travellers' Bungalow at Policondah, thirteen miles